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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 004297

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [FR](#) [SY](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQI PRESIDENT GIVES READOUT ON TRIP TO FRANCE,  
PROSPECTS FOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel Speckhard for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: On November 18, President Talabani gave Charge a readout of his state visit to Paris earlier this month. Talabani stated that he was received by President Jacques Chirac, who had listened attentively as Talabani requested more French aid in police training and economic and trade assistance. Most importantly, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari had talked privately with French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier and had won the latter's support for extending UNSCR 1546 on MNF-I mandate in Iraq. With respect to reconciliation, Talabani agreed with the Charge that a meeting of Political Party leaders was urgently needed to get reconciliation back on track. The President noted the intention to have this before the end of the month, but was open to a meeting as early as November 23 when pressed by the Charge. Talabani expressed, however, his impatience with what he perceived to be American "softness" on the Sunni Arabs. The Sunnis Arabs needed to learn that they could no longer have one foot in the government and one foot in the insurgency. The Shia also needed to understand that they could not lead and continue to have extra-governmental militia groups terrorizing Sunni Arab citizens. There would be no reconciliation, Talabani stressed, unless the two main Arab factions could openly agree on working toward two things: real Sunni Arab engagement in the political process and abandonment of the insurgency, and Shia determination to control the extra-legal activities of their militia groups.  
END SUMMARY.

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A Successful Visit to Paris  
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2. (C) On November 18, President Talabani gave Charge a readout of his state visit to Paris earlier this month. Talabani stated that he was received by President Jacques Chirac, who had listened attentively as Talabani requested more French aid in police training and economic and trade assistance. Most importantly, Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari had talked privately with French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier and had won the latter's support for extending UNSCR 1546 on MNF-I mandate in Iraq. Barnier also agreed to open a French consulate in Erbil, Talabani reported.

3. (C) Talabani also pressed French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy to extend France's police and counterterrorism training to the Iraqi Armed Forces. Sarkozy was very friendly, Talabani stated, and appeared willing to consider increasing the amount of training for Iraqi security forces. He then met with three members of the Socialist bloc, including presidential candidate Segolene Royal. According to Talabani, all three began by insisting that Coalition Forces should immediately withdraw from Iraq; however, after carefully explaining the situation, Talabani convinced them that such a move would be counterproductive. The French had coined a new phrase for the withdrawal issue,

with many influential journalists now referring to a "horizon" for a timetable for withdrawal.

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The Political Party Leaders Meeting  
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¶4. (C) Talabani agreed with the Charge on the importance of getting together political leaders to get reconciliation back on track. He was open to a meeting as early as November 23. Talabani emphasized that the leaders needed to engage fully and frankly on the key issues, otherwise it would be a waste of time. He also noted that the top leaders of all the parties had to attend; since Iraqiyya List leader and former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi was seriously ill and could not travel from London, his deputy Adnan Pachachi should be required to attend in Allawi's place, Talabani stated.

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Time for the U.S. to Get Tough  
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¶5. (C) Talabani expressed impatience with what he perceived to be "softness" on the Sunni Arabs. The American Sunni engagement plan was not achieving its goals, Talabani stated, because the Sunni Arabs were not being forced to make a public choice between being a part of the government - and all the responsibilities that entailed - and being part of the opposition. Sunni Arab politicians were given far too much leeway to behave badly, saying reasonable things in private and then whipping up the "Sunni street" into a frenzy in public with their inflammatory rhetoric against the government. For example, Muslim Ulema Council (MUC) leader Harith al-Dari continually harangues listeners in his

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Arabic-language radio broadcasts to attack the Americans, and yet neither the U.S. nor the neighboring Sunni Arab countries do anything to discourage this behavior. In fact, Sunni Arab countries are actively assisting Sunni politicians to undermine the U.S. effort in Iraq. None of the Sunni Arab politicians in Baghdad were being held to account for their inability to lead the Sunni Arab people away from violence and into full cooperation and engagement with the Government of Iraq, Talabani complained.

¶6. (C) The problem was not confined to the Sunni Arabs, Talabani noted. Both the Sunni Arabs and the Shia had rights, but also responsibilities. The Shia also needed to control their militias like Badr Organization and the Jaysh al-Mahdi. There would be no reconciliation unless the two main Arab factions could openly agree on working toward two things: real Sunni Arab engagement in the political process and abandonment of the insurgency, and Shia determination to control the extra-legal activities of their militia groups.  
SPECKHARD